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Implementation of Universal Primary Education Programme in Uganda and its Influence on Education Performance

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Abstract

This study was an assessment of implementation process of Universal Primary education (UPE) programme in Uganda and how it influences the performance of the programme. The principal whim for undertaking this study was the yearning to assess the quality of UPE in Uganda derived from the view that having reached the year 2015, the year that was set for achieving UPE Millennium Development Goal number 2, and the national commitment to improving quality primary education remains unclear. In order to attain this, a combination of research methods have been conducted particularly the interviews and documentary analysis; where 11 interviews were carried out. Further analysis was done on content documents Annual Education Abstracts from the Ministry of education and sports and some reports from NAPE and UWEZO. From the findings, quality implementation framework was not followed, implementation process influences programme performance, and it's not only implementation that influences performance but also other factors.

Key Words: Universal Primary Education; Education reforms; Free Education; Decentralisation; School Faculties Grant.

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The study concluded that government's failure to follow the right frameworks for implementation of any new innovation could be the reason for the many challenges the UPE programme is facing. Again, the poor quality results of the programme are associated with the government not focusing on the quality but focused more on the quantity right from the beginning.

The study recommended that government should focus more on the product of UPE programme, look at the sustainability of the programme, bring all stakeholders on board, and that Government tendency of owning children more than parents should cease.

1. Introduction

Universal Primary Education in the literal sense means everyone in a population having access to a full primary school education; however, when examined closely, difficulties emerge over what is meant by the terms "Universal", "Primary" and "Education" [1]. The global agenda set the target year of 2015 for all children of primary school going age, in the world to be in position to complete primary school cycle, and for boys and girls to have equal access to education at all levels. The major aim of the United Nations' Millennium Development Goals [2] was to reduce the number of uneducated African youth Uganda inclusive. In view of the above, education reforms of the late 1990s lay in a process of policy development that began with a major Education Review Commissioned by the Government of Uganda (GoU) in 1987. This review culminated into the 1992 publication of a GoU white paper on education that set out a major education reform programme over the next 25 year period. The main emphasis in the white paper was on providing educational opportunities for all the country's children.

In 1997, the Ugandan government launched a 20-year Poverty Eradication Action Plan (PEAP) and Poverty Action Fund (PAF), where primary education was a central component of the strategies to eliminate poverty by 2020 [3]. To emphasize the role of primary education in poverty eradication, the government identified UPE as one of the key sectors to benefit from the PAF. Through a capitation grant, PAF enables UPE to improve equitable access to basic education by removing the burden of paying school fees, and enhancing the quality of primary education by providing schools with resources necessary to run them. [4]. The international education agenda therefore coincided with Government of Uganda (GoU) UPE policy in accordance with the government White Paper on Education of 1992. It is against this background that in December 1996, the President of the republic of Uganda declared the UPE programme. Under this policy, government was to provide "Free" education that is paying fees for up to four children maximum from each family of whom, 2 must be girls or if there is a disabled child, he/ she must be given the priority. This was a broad effort to achieve Universal Primary Education for all children aged 6-12years by 2000.

The policy framework for managing UPE in Uganda was captured in the UPE policy guidelines issued in 1998 [5]. Due to lack of commitment from stakeholders, the policy was revised and re-issued on the 6th of October 2008. They spelt out the relevant guidelines on policy, planning, roles and responsibilities of stakeholders in the implementation of UPE. The guidelines aim was to strengthen the stakeholder's commitment, provide obligatory clarifications on the main policy positions in order to avoid imitation, eliminate possible areas of role

conflict and abandonment of the vital aspects of the programme as per Ministry of Education and Sports 2008.

In spite of Uganda having past the year 2015, the year that was set for achieving UPE, Millennium Development Goal number 2, the education reports and other studies on UPE reveal that Uganda has not fully achieved UPE programme. Inconsistencies, variations, criticism, debates on the quality of education provided are the order of the day. One therefore wonders whether it is the implementation that influences performance and achievement of the programme. This study thus investigated how UPE is implemented in Uganda and ascertained its influence on UPE performance. The study assessed the linkage between rhetoric and reality, policy and practice on implementation of UPE programme and its influence to UPE programme performance. The Objective was to establish how implementation of UPE programme influences its performance. It is hypothesised that Implementation greatly influences performance of the UPE programme.

2. Literature Review

The 1995 Constitution of the Republic of Uganda establishes education as a right for all. In addition, in its report of 2004 the author [6] makes the point that the state has an obligation to establish sufficient schools, hire required teachers, and provide quality education as laid down in the International Rights Instruments. The state has provided universal primary education and has increased its spending to try to meet the demands of universal primary education.

UPE means the State funded education programme where tuition fees are paid by government and the principle of equitable access to conducive, quality, relevant and affordable education are emphasised for all children irrespective of gender, race and disability [7]. Given the fact that UPE is a partnership between many stakeholders with different roles and responsibilities, proper implementation of organising and planning functions is crucial for the success of UPE as this will enable Ugandan children of school going age to enroll and remain in school. In terms of managing UPE, the Pre-Primary and Primary Education Department is in charge [8]. The Education Planning Department is responsible for overall policy planning, formulation monitoring and evaluation of education policies, plans, strategies and guidelines in the ministry for all the various departments. The Ministry of Education is assisted by other Ministries including the Ministry of Gender, Ministry of Finance, Planning and Economic Development, Ministry of Local Government and the Ministry of Public Service in ensuring that education sector services are effectively delivered [7].

The Pre-Primary and Primary department is responsible for general provision of UPE; the Education Standards Agency and the National Curriculum Development Centre team up to ensure education standards through monitoring and evaluation. While the Department of Finance and Administration handles all the finances and Human Resources Development the overall training of teachers; provision of instructional materials to school; and infrastructural development is left to other departments within the Ministry of Education and Sports [9]. UPE in Uganda is managed in a decentralised system with various stakeholders playing a role in the formulation, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of the policy as provided for in the Constitution of the Republic of Uganda 1995 article 176 and Local Government Act of 1997 article 21. For example the Local Government Act of 1997 provides for, pre-primary, primary, special and technical schools to be managed by

district councils with each district having the authority to formulate, approve, and execute its own development plan, register UPE children, and distribute textbooks.

Despite the fact that the author [10] greatly emphasises the role of the district towards UPE, other stakeholders also play a part in the implementation of UPE as further explored below. The district is the highest level of local government with the district local council, also referred to as LC5, as the highest political office led by the district chairperson elected by universal adult suffrage. Followed by the chief administrative officer as head of Public servants at district level, appointed by the central government Public Service Commission, and responsible for finances and for the implementation of all district and central government decisions. Below the local council 5, there are other lower local governments units such as municipalities, municipal councils, town councils and sub counties. Currently there are 116 district councils, 22 municipal councils, 174 town councils and 1403 sub county councils [11]. Although district staff operates under the control and supervision of the chief Administrative officer (CAO), in terms of education, the District Education Officer (DEO) is the key official to whom the head teachers approach to organise the salary transfers into teachers' accounts and collects school supplies, hand in any reports and receive communication from the National Ministry. Most of the authority to control the affairs of individual schools/colleges is effectively passed on to the head teachers/principals, schools management committees (SMCs) at primary school level and Boards of Governors at Secondary Schools, and the Parent-Teachers Associations (PTAs) [12].

Despite the fact that the legislative and executive authority is vested in the district council, at the district level, it is the joint effort of the town clerk, district education officers, chief administrative officers, Resident District Commissioners (RDCs), senior education officers, education officers, inspector of schools, assistant inspectors of schools, principle inspector of schools, LC 5 chairman, the Mayor, and school management committees to ensure successful implementation of UPE [9:b11-5]. The district council is then followed by the Sub county level comprising of sub-county chiefs, the local council III and 5 chairpersons, the mayor, school management committees and coordinating centre tutors (CCT's) [9:b14]. At the school level, which is also the last level in terms of institutional structure of UPE comprises of school management committees, head teachers, the teachers and the pupils [9:b:11].

2.1. How implementation influences performance in education

Primary education is one of the key sectors identified in governments Poverty Eradication Plan [13] to benefit from Poverty Action Fund [14]. These PAF resources include Universal primary education capitation grant aimed at improving equitable access to basic education and enhance quality of primary education. This UPE capitation grants is channelled to districts as conditional grants to be utilized strictly in accordance with general guidelines as a way of decentralizing the primary education system. The School facility Grant (SFG) is available to needy schools communities to build classrooms, libraries, teacher's houses, and procuring classroom furniture. However, most reports from the Ministry of Education and Sports and many stakeholders indicate a challenge of shoddy work under SFG programme. This has been attributed to communities and parents non participation in the implementation and sustainability of school programmes. However, since they are not involved in the planning and decision-making process from the start, they do not feel to be part and parcel of the

programme. Since the funds come with specific guidelines to be utilized accordingly, this in turn limits the planning and decision making to parents. With conditional grants, the government does most of the planning and decision making and what is done at school level is only implementation.

The UPE capitation funds assume a very long chain before they finally reach the school and along the way, the money is delayed and some is misappropriated. Consequently this misappropriation and persistent delays have adverse effects on parents and other stakeholder's participation in planning and decision-making, as they cannot easily monitor the funds. As the funds are channelled to lower levels, additional conditions are attached. These additional conditions further discourage the participation of the stakeholders at the lower level- like the parents hence impacting on the performance of the programme. Author [15] noted that education decisions and responsibilities at the school level are limited, particularly decision regarding personnel and organization. Consequently, governments over indulge in key education decisions and responsibilities that greatly undermine other stakeholder's participation in planning and decision making especially parents and communities at large, this too greatly affects the performance of the programme because other stake holders will leave everything to be done by the government.

Formal leadership facilitates implementation and continuation of any given programme by developing and allocating resources of various kinds, coordinating organizational efforts and motivating and supporting the implementation efforts of staff. In addition, leaders can support a learning and experimental programme through the manner in which they confer rewards. Formal and informal organizational leaders act as champions and opinion leaders of the programme if results are to be seen. The role of leaders plays an important part to the programme performance. Implementation and performance of the programme are facilitated when adequate and appropriate resources are available or attainable. This includes not only financial resources, but physical resources and space, human resources, knowledge resources, reputational support and shared resources from other organizations. Organizational setup and climate facilitates programme implementation and continuation if the innovation fits well with the culture and is defined by staff as enhancing the work environment. A culture supportive of innovation may also be important. The flexibility and feasibility of the innovation are additional salient factors in facilitating implementation and continuation [16].

3. Methodology

Much of the research process was dominated by the qualitative research paradigm. The major concern for qualitative research paradigm is to offer explanations, opinions or personal view points, clarifications of social forms, which human beings have around themselves [17]. The category of persons who comprised the study population was drawn from government officials at national and district level, and the civil servants. Others included the officials from international donor organisations, and national NGOs. Respondents included the District Education officer, the District Inspector of Schools, and the Chief Administrative Officer from the two districts of Buhweju and Kiruhura. The Director of Education standards, representative from NAPE and UNEB, NGOs at the national and international level involved in implementation of education programmes particularly FAWE, UNICEF, and UWEZO were all involved in this study. The purposive sampling technique was used to choose the needed respondents. Purposive sampling technique enables researchers to handpick the cases to be

included in the sample on the basis of their judgment [18]. The method used in data collection was interviews. Interview guides were used on key informants using structured guided interview. Reading documents from the ministry of education for example education abstracts and annual reports was done to obtain Statistical data from the Ministry of Education EMIS department for thorough justification.

The reason to why the researcher used the interview guide on all the respondents was twofold. One was that by the nature of duties and responsibilities the respondents have, it is only possible to interact with them on one to one other that giving them questionnaires to feel. Two is that interviews generate in-depth information because in the process of interviews, more probe questions are asked to bring out the deeper understanding of the phenomenon. Interviews allow the researcher to get inside the context and understand the perspectives of those who are involved [19].

The analysis of data involved linking the data with the variables under the study. Qualitative data was received and organized into themes resulting from the research hypothesis. Descriptions, opinions, views, and observations of all the respondents were presented as obtained, interpreted, discussed and concluded hence making recommendations on each idea or view as analysed. The statistical data was put in the computer and analysed using a computer programme, the Statistical Package for Social Science (SPSS) for verification.

Table 1: Categories of Respondents in the study

Category	Targeted			Responded			
	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total	Percentage
DISs	01	01	02	01	01	02	100%
DEOs	01	01	02	01	01	02	100%
CAOs	02	00	02	01	00	01	50%
UNEB	00	01	01	00	01	01	100%
NAPE	01	00	01	01	00	01	100%
FAWE	01	00	01	01	00	01	100%
UWEZO	01	00	01	01	00	01	100%
UNICEF	01	00	01	01	00	01	100%
World Bank	01	00	01	01	00	01	100%
Total	09	03	12	08	03	11	

3.1. Presentation of Findings

This section presents the findings on the implementation process of UPE programme in Uganda and how it influences performance of the programme. It runs in the hypothesis that implementation of UPE programme is not fully implemented and that implementation of UPE programme influences its performance.

3.2. Universal Primary Education Implementation in Uganda

The first objective of this study was to establish how UPE programme is implemented. To reach the bottom line of this inquiry, it was hypothesised that “UPE programme is not fully implemented as earlier planned”. The second objective was to establish how implementation of UPE programme influences its performance. It was also hypothesised that “the way universal primary education programme is being implemented, greatly influences the performance of the programme”. Emphasis was therefore placed on the following key issues: what steps were taken during the introduction of UPE programme; what are the implementation practices of UPE programme; implementation documents available to guide the implementation; how accessible were the implementation documents; how have the stakeholders been involved in the implementation of the programme, and how has the implementation of the programme improved education performance.

On the implementation of UPE programme, to whether UPE program followed the clear steps of policy implementation process, the response was that, to some extent parents were not fully engaged in the process. Every actor needed to have played his part. It was reported that the programme has been dogged by inadequate human, financial and material resources. Inadequate, meaning all the resources needed for the proper implementation of UPE programme were not enough and sometimes they were not available. It was stated that UPE should be completely free, and that supervision and inspection of schools should be well facilitated. To whether all stakeholders of UPE programme are fully involved and whether they understand the implementation process of the programme, it was revealed that although the guidelines provides that its parents role to provide uniform, food for pupils, physical participation or contributing to construction of buildings, how to do it was not clarified in the guidelines.

It was revealed that UPE objectives were clear and government has tried to achieve most of them. What was put on paper was achieved for example making basic education affordable. A challenge is a few especially teacher retention and child completion but going by the figures from various reports, there has been achievements especially on enrolment but is not doing well on quality of performance. From the onset, UPE programme did not put a clear line between schooling and learning. Quality education is a combination of many factors but the main component is quality learning by pupils. The role of partners particularly World Bank in UPE programme is to support government in improving effectiveness in public primary schools in Uganda. This is done through improving teacher quality and performance with specific reference to instructional materials in teaching thus helping the government to improve the school environment. The Bank was enhancing school services management through providing technical assistance, and capacity building, financing advisory, monitoring and evaluation. UPE original objectives didn't focus on quality learning and teaching and the government has relatively achieved them. What they have not achieved is quality learning and teaching and it was not the priority from the beginning.

4.3. Discussion of the findings

Basing on all respondents perception on implementation process and how it influences the performance of UPE, it is observed that different stakeholders perceive implementation differently. In view of the assumption of this study that implementation process influences performance, this objective was guided by six other sub-hypothesis; UPE objectives being clear, UPE implementation guidelines being available and accessible,

introduction of UPE followed steps of policy implementation process, UPE led to better performance, and all stake holders in education are involved in the implementation process of the UPE programme. To a greater extent, the results of the findings support the general hypothesis plus much of the literature that implementation process has an influence on performance.

A correlation analysis was done on quantitative data to gauge the respondents' opinion on the relationship between implementation process and performance of UPE. The Spearman's correlation co-efficiency was used as seen in table 2 bellow

Table2: Correlation between UPE implementation and its Performance

Correlations				
			UPE Implementation	UPE Performance
Spearman's rho	UPE Implementation	Correlation Coefficient	1.000	.495
		Sig. (1-tailed)	.	.159
		N	84	84
	UPE Performance	Correlation Coefficient	.495	1.000
		Sig. (1-tailed)	.159	.
		N	84	84

It is observed as in table 2 above that there is a positive correlation between UPE implementation and UPE performance. The results indicate that, the correlation of 0.495 is moderate which implies an improvement in UPE implementation though the level of association between UPE implementation process and UPE performance is not statistically significant because the significance level of 0.159 is greater than 0.05.

The implication from the above test is that implementation process has an influence to performance. Better implementation practices lead to better performance of any programme. However, since the significance level is not statistically significant, it implies that it's not only implementation process that influences performance. There are also other factors that influence performance. Most respondents pointed out that the introduction of UPE did not follow the right steps of policy or programme implementation process. Some of the issues sited were that; Parents and teachers who are key stakeholders in UPE implementation were not involved during programme development, the programme lacked thorough planning, the programme did not focus on quality, and that the country was not ready at the time of inception of the programme. This is supported by the Quality Implementation Framework model [20].

This model spells out clearly the processes and steps that require to be followed if any new innovation is to be implemented. The model emphasises that for any new innovation to be implemented, key critical steps must be followed. For example, step one is about conduction a needs assessment for any new innovation to begin. This is necessary because it answered the question of why did Uganda opt for UPE programme, what problems or

conditions the programme was going to address, and whom was the programme going to benefit so as to be deemed necessary. Understanding answers to these questions helped the researcher to position the UPE programme in his study. Therefore, the framework was very appropriate for explaining the UPE programme in Uganda.

Furthermore, step two of the QIF talks about conducting a fit assessment. Looking at the UPE programme, the understanding of whether the programme fit the setting and how the programme matched with the identified needs of government was very important. The need to understand the consumer's preference as they were the ones going to participate in all the programme activities was also vital. In respect to UPE programme, results indicate that some of the stakeholders especially the primary beneficiaries were not consulted. This therefore implies that the critical steps talked about in the quality implementation framework were not followed hence an assumption that it could be one of the causes of the challenges facing the programme.

Responses from the district officials and key informants at the National level revealed that the inception of UPE did not carry out through planning. This was therefore seen as the first step of UPE failure. Author [21] states that "the highest reward goes to those who plan and attention to the future brings benefit even in the small events of everyday life". The Authors in [22] define planning as a fundamental element for predetermining what the institutions proposes to accomplish and how it is to be accomplished. Starr further urges that planning is selecting a particular set of feasible decisions from among a number of alternative sets. Thus planning was of relevance for the successful implementation of UPE. The QIF supports the above argument where it highlights on the readiness of the organization before implementation of the innovation. The feedback from the host setting on the readiness, the availability of documents regarding capacity building strategy for UPE was also necessary to explore.

Phase two of the QIF emphasises creating a structure for implementation. This is assessing responsibilities and developing teams well qualified to support and deliver programme activities. An implementation plan is then put in place with specific roles and responsibilities and the whole process of implementation. Phase three of the QIF talks about beginning of real implementation that is providing the necessary technical assistance to the organization to deal with inevitable practical problems that came up when the programme started. Therefore, government needed to have explored the problems associated to the implementation process of UPE programme when it started one of them being attitude especially from the key implementers of the programme and see how the problems could be resolved, the support and resources to be put in place or what changes can be made to overcome the problems.

4. Conclusion

On the whole, this study has justified that the way UPE programme is implemented has a significant influence on its performance. This is because this justification has been proved by use of scientific method of testing it using Spearman's correlation. It was also supported by the literature in this study. The key issues that came up under this chapter are that the introduction of UPE did not follow the steps of policy implementation process; all stakeholders were not fully involved in the implementation of the UPE programme especially parents and the

community and that, the introduction of the UPE programme did not undergo thorough, planning. It was also observed from this study that the performance of UPE programme is not only influenced by implementation process but there are also other factors that influence performance.

5. Recommendations

It was suggested that to address the future needs, the policy should be data driven and a system of obtaining feedback should be established. The government should focus more on the product of UPE programme look at the sustainability of the programme. In addition, teacher remuneration should be improved, all stakeholders should be brought on board, and that Government tendency of owning children more than parents should cease. Other guideline focusing on quality need to be put in place, the government should bear the primary responsibly of delivering quality education not just any education, the policy should encourage parents to take part in the learning of their children, talk to teachers about their children's learning, ask questions to school committee, and hold teachers accountable. That the government should strengthen monitoring and evaluation of education programmes. Money released for UPE programme should be followed and assessment of progress and policy revisions should be done.

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